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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 2750  
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE  
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RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 5145  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 2889  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 2754  
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 3389  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0980  
RHMFIUU/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3514  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 000557

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: "TRUST" NGO HELPING FILL SOCIAL SERVICE GAP

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¶1. (U) Sensitive but Unclassified. Not for Internet distribution.

¶2. (SBU) SUMMARY: Embassy Political Assistant met with NGO Chairperson Lyudmila Petuhova to learn about the NGO Ynam's ("Trust") activity. The NGO provides legal, psychological and reproductive health consultation services and fills a gap that government social services cannot fill. It also runs a library, provides limited Internet access to the public, and conducts awareness programs on trafficking in persons, domestic violence, family issues and discrimination. As such, the NGO has found its own niche, but it relies solely on funding from the international donor community, and must work hard to ensure its own continuity.  
END SUMMARY.

PROVIDING LEGAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL, AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH SUPPORT

¶3. (SBU) The Council Chairperson of the "Ynam" Club, Lyudmila Petuhova talked with Embassy Political Assistant on April 28 about the organization's background and activities. Ynam was founded and registered in 1997 and re-registered in 2004. It has worked to provide social and legal support to the country's residents. The club offers a variety of mental health, legal and reproductive health awareness programs, operates a resource library and provides limited Internet access to the public. Psychological and legal assistance is provided free of charge via telephone hotline or in-office consultations. The club also conducts programs that educate the public regarding trafficking in persons, domestic violence, discrimination and a wide range of other social issues.

STRUCTURE

¶4. (SBU) There are seven staff members and about 35 volunteers, including three psychologists and eleven lawyers. Decisions about the organization's activities are made at general meetings that take place at least once a year. The Club Council or Chairperson determines the organization's priorities. Ynam's funding comes from International Organizations, Western embassies and local businesses. Not long ago, the British Embassy purchased a facility for the NGO and provided it with office furniture and equipment, while the U.S. Embassy and the UNHCR have sponsored their participation in various

conferences and training events abroad in the past.

#### ADDRESSING THE TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS ISSUE

15. (SBU) Ynam conducts awareness seminars to prevent trafficking in persons (TIP) for the public and for those who plan to travel abroad. They offer guidance on what documents travelers should have and also provide useful contact information for getting help abroad if they believe they are at risk of being trafficked. Ynam established an international network of NGOs abroad who can assist TIP victims. In 1998, the NGO assisted a woman from Turkmenistan who had become a victim of trafficking in Abu Dhabi, by facilitating her return to Turkmenistan. Several Ynam representatives attended a training seminar on TIP in Washington in 2004 as part of a Visitors Program, and also traveled to Great Britain to share their experience with the British NGO Citizens Advice Bureau in 2000.

#### TELEPHONE HOTLINE PROVIDES EXTRA SUPPORT

16. (SBU) The NGO initiated its "Trust" Telephone Hotline consultation program in 1999. The Ministry of Communications provided the NGO with the telephone number 450911, because the last three digits are reminiscent of the American 911 system. Similar to 911, the NGO is prepared to counsel callers on a range of legal, psychological, and social issues. Hotline consultations are anonymous and confidential. On average, Ynam has received about 2,500 telephone calls per year from predominantly female callers. If callers want further consultation, they are then invited to visit the NGO and meet with a representative.

#### LIBRARY AND INTERNET ACCESS FOR A HUNGRY PUBLIC

17. (SBU) The NGO also runs a lending library that contains resources

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relevant to their mission, as well as a wide range of fiction and academic literature, periodicals, reference books and children's literature open to the public. Since May 2008, Ynam has been able to provide limited free Internet access to the public at four computer stations. The organization aspires to expand the number of Internet stations it has, and is seeking out a source of funding. It also plans to buy additional stock for the library and wants to begin paying honoraria to its specialists.

#### CIVIL SOCIETY DEVELOPING--ALBEIT SLOWLY

18. (SBU) As Petuhova noted, Ynam is funded solely through sponsorship. Not long ago, when the organization considered charging modest fees to cover the cost of some of its services, the Ministry of Justice representative warned Petuhova that if the organization were to generate any income, then it would have to be closed and re-register as a commercial entity. That said, as a fully registered public organization, Ynam has enjoyed full cooperation from the government. When asked her opinion about the development of civil society in Turkmenistan, Petuhova observed that there it is developing and growing, slowly but surely. "NGOs are slowly growing in number, and it is a good sign," she said. With the aim of promoting NGO development, Over the last few years, Ynam conducted a nationwide seminar on resolving internal organizational conflicts and a seminar on the principles of consulting. NGO representatives from all the provinces participated, and the programs were a great success.

19. (SBU) COMMENT: Considering the restrictions that bar NGOs from earning any income for operations, Ynam's directors have their work cut out for them in eliciting regular financial support from the international donor community to ensure continuity with the important services the organization provides, especially the legal and psychological consultations and the hotline. Such services fill a gap in social services here that the government is unlikely to address anytime soon. Groups such as Ynam should continue to receive support and be nurtured by the international community. END COMMENT.

MILES